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General Assembly

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Fifty-eighth session
Item 94 (d)
Environment and sustainable development: further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Draft provisional rules of procedure of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Note by the Secretary-General

Corrigendum

Annex

Rule 1
Composition of delegations

The rule *should read*

Rule 1
Composition of delegations

The delegation of each State participating in the International Meeting and of the European Commission shall consist of a head of delegation and such other representatives, alternative representatives and advisers as may be required.

Rule 61

The rule *should read*

Rule 61
Associate members of regional commissions[2]

Representatives designated by the associate members of regional commissions listed in the footnote[2] may participate as observers, without the right to vote, in

* Reissued for technical reasons.

03-64789* (E) 151203

the deliberations of the International Meeting, the Main Committee, and, as appropriate, any other committee or working group on questions within the scope of their activities.

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[*] American Samoa, Anguilla, Aruba, British Virgin Islands, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, French Polynesia, Guam, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, New Caledonia, Puerto Rico, United States Virgin Islands.

Rule 65
Representatives of non-governmental organizations
Paragraph 1

The paragraph *should read*:

1. Non-governmental organizations accredited to participate in the International Meeting may designate representatives to sit as observers at public sessions of the International Meeting and its Main Committee.

Footnote 2 to rule 62 and footnote 3 to rule 65

The footnotes should be renumbered 3 and 4, respectively.

Footnote 4 (formerly footnote 3) to rule 65, final sentence

The sentence *should read*:

Therefore, based on Agenda 21, rule 65 shall apply equally to non-governmental organizations and other major groups.

Rule 66, first sentence

For rules 60 and 61 *read* rules 60 to 65.

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General Assembly

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12 November 2003

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Fifty-eighth session
Agenda item 49
Information and communication technologies for development

Information and communication technologies for development: progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/295

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present progress report is submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 57/295. In that resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, as Chairman of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to work closely with organizations of the United Nations system and with the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force to develop a comprehensive information and communication technologies strategy for the United Nations system and to submit a progress report to the Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

Section II of the report reviews the status of collaboration on information and communication technologies in the United Nations system, including the ongoing consultative/coordination processes, the work of the Task Force and the launch of joint work of the United Nations system and the Task Force. Sections III and IV describe future actions and next steps to be taken towards the implementation of the resolution.

* The submission of the report was delayed owing to the need for consultations with member organizations of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 57/295 of 20 December 2002 on information and communication technologies for development, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, as Chairman of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), to work closely with organizations of the United Nations system and with the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force to develop a comprehensive information and communication technologies strategy for the United Nations system.

2. The General Assembly affirmed the need to use information and communication technologies as a strategic tool to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the development programmes and technical cooperation activities of the United Nations system. It also emphasized the need for coordination and synergy between programmes and activities of the United Nations system and the crucial role that information and communication technologies can play in facilitating such coordination.

3. The implementation of the resolution is under active consideration within the framework of CEB and the outcome will be reported to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. Meanwhile, the present note outlines the present state of collaboration within the system and the initial steps under way pursuant to paragraph 4 of resolution 57/295.

II. Status of collaboration on information and communication technologies in the United Nations system

A. Ongoing consultative coordination processes in the United Nations system

4. As more advanced information and communication technologies become available, organizations of the United Nations system are making considerable investments into the development and launching of their information systems. The scope and range of these efforts raises many important questions. Chief among them is how to ensure that different components of organizations and of the system as a whole — now working with a plurality of different information systems — effectively communicate, share information and work together, and the extent to which the investments made, or being contemplated, can benefit from the collective experience of the system leading to greater harmonization, efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

5. Inter-agency cooperation in the area of information and communication technologies was initially focused on the exchange of technical information among information and communication technologies managers rather than on the use of such information to advance overall goals of the organization itself or those of the United Nations system as a whole. Information and communication technologies were regarded principally as support services and the incentives or value added to be achieved from coordination were not obvious or apparent.

6. More recently, a number of elements have emerged that have motivated not only greater exchanges of information and stronger collaboration on information and

communication technologies among information technologies managers, but also heightened awareness among senior managers of the potential offered by information and communication technologies and, thus, of the benefits to be derived from more strategic approaches to inter-agency cooperation and coordination. Technology is opening new possibilities for greater, cheaper and easier connectivity and interactivity in relation to the ever-growing number of issues that affect the system as a whole. Member States themselves are becoming increasingly aware of the potential of information and communication technologies and are asking the United Nations system to make better use of its investments in this area. Greater cooperation is no longer seen as an option but is now regarded as essential.

7. Added impetus to enhance coordination has resulted from a reform of the then Administrative Committee on Coordination, now the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, that was launched in 1999. One of the outcomes of that process was to raise the level of consideration of information and communication technologies-related issues to senior management. It was recognized that although considerable work had already been accomplished to deploy information and communication technologies for different aspects of the work of the system and individual gains were being achieved, information-sharing remained minimal and coordination was somewhat narrowly focused, involving only a small number of practitioners, mostly in administrative and management areas. It was apparent that for information and communication technologies to be truly mainstreamed in the work of the organizations and of the system, this would have to change.

8. There is now widespread recognition within the system, at the level of senior programme managers, of the potential of judicious and strategic use of information and communication technologies not only as a tool for enhancing management and administration but as a vehicle for improving programme delivery and enhancing the impact of the system's work. Thus, whereas inter-agency consideration of information and communication technologies issues previously took place mostly at the technical level, these are now on the agendas of both the High Level Committee on Management and also that of the High Level Committee on Programmes, the two main subsidiary bodies of CEB.

9. The High Level Committee on Management has had information and communication technologies on its agenda since its establishment in 1999 and has urged information and communication technologies managers to focus on specific areas where synergies can bring greater efficiencies, such as information exchanges, building partnerships and preventing duplication. Specific initiatives pursued by the High Level Committee on Management include: (a) a compendium of good information and communication technologies practices across the United Nations system; (b) the United Nations system Extranet; (c) an inter-agency search engine; (d) an information and communication technologies network communication tool; and (e) an inventory of framework agreements for procurement.

10. The United Nations system Extranet provides a platform for enhanced information-sharing among staff of United Nations system organizations. It allows exchanges of information between organizations of information previously only available on Intranets and thus restricted. So far, 55 United Nations entities and most CEB member organizations have been connected to this dynamic information

base. Work is continuing on the expansion, and continued management, of the content of the Extranet.

11. Extensive work has been undertaken to establish an inter-agency search engine across the public web sites of all United Nations system organizations — and is expected to be in place shortly. The search engine, which will be based on the Google service, will provide a valuable tool for retrieving information from all web sites throughout the United Nations system, including working towards consistent processes that will help enable system-wide content management techniques.

12. The compendium of good information and communication technologies practice across the United Nations system, currently being developed, is intended to become a knowledge-sharing tool providing senior management with concise up-to-date analyses of practices and lessons learned across organizations. In addition, an inventory of application software is being undertaken and is intended to promote knowledge of what exists in the system, exchanges of information and reduce instances of duplication of efforts.

13. Considerable work has also been put into identifying and testing a collaborative communication tool to be used first to facilitate information-sharing for information and communication technologies practitioners but thereafter by all inter-agency communities of practice. The CEB secretariat is currently implementing the information and communication technologies network communication tool.

14. The High Level Committee on Management is also working with the relevant procurement groups to support the expansion of appropriate joint purchasing through framework agreements and volume discounts for information and communication technologies hardware, software and services.

15. While more needs to be done, these initiatives reflect progress towards the requests contained in paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 57/295, that work be undertaken in: (a) applications for capacity to create, share and disseminate knowledge; (b) integration into development and technical cooperation activities of organizations of the system; (c) collaborative networks and communities of practice; (d) common platforms — databases, documentation and meetings; (e) exchanging experiences and information-sharing; and (f) training programmes.

B. Work of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

16. The plan of action of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force includes working with CEB to help integrate the Board's strategic commitments related to information and communication technologies with those of the Task Force in order to maximize synergies. The objective of this work is to further integrate information and communication technologies in development assistance portfolios and programmes and to enhance the coordination of multilateral initiatives. Even before the Task Force was established, the high-level panel of experts on information and communication technologies, convened by the Secretary-General in April 2000, recommended "development, on an urgent basis, of a comprehensive programme for transforming the United Nations into a knowledge organization. Such a programme should contain a coherent set of training and

organizational measures aimed at bringing the Organization's collective mindset into the digital age" (A/55/75-E/2000/55, para. 24 (e)).

17. Since its launch in November 2001, the Task Force has served as a platform for promoting partnerships of public, private, non-profit, civil society and multilateral stakeholders by helping develop new models of leadership and collaboration to advance significantly the global effort to bridge the digital divide and foster digital opportunity.

C. Launch of the joint work of the United Nations system and the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

18. To launch the process of implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/295, the CEB and Task Force secretariats organized a brainstorming session in July 2003 to discuss United Nations system strategies on information and communication technologies for development. The meeting was attended by information technology managers, programme and management officials from the organizations of the United Nations system, members of the Task Force and a number of experts. The meeting was chaired by Brendan Tuohy (Ireland), Convenor of the Working Group on Human Capacity Development of the Task Force.

19. The meeting resulted in a constructive dialogue among partners with a shared sense of purpose. Information technology managers and Task Force members agreed that given the different and diverse requirements of the organizations of the system, it might not be possible or feasible for the United Nations system to have a single e-policy. It is nevertheless both feasible and necessary to continue to enhance coordination and information-sharing and to work towards the elaboration of an overall system-wide information and communication technologies strategy geared to advancing system-wide coherence and effectiveness and providing a common sense of direction for the system as a whole.

20. Participants recognized and stressed the need to distinguish and yet build complementarities between the two interrelated streams of activities in the United Nations system: (a) the use of information and communication technologies for strengthening the work of the system, particularly in development; and (b) the use of information and communication technologies as a strategic management tool. It was agreed that the development of an overall vision and the identification of key goals related to information and communication technologies for development needs to be solidly anchored in the real-life information and communication technologies capacities and constraints of the entities of the system.

III. Future actions

21. Discussions at the brainstorming session, as well as at meetings of the High Level Committee on Management, show that to move towards enhanced coordination in the information and communication technologies area, work needs to be undertaken in parallel at a number of levels, that of information and communication technologies managers, senior management and member States, and a number of basic roadblocks and impediments have to be overcome. This would require more coherent approaches towards, in particular, budget, procurement and

financial procedures which tend to breed isolationist approaches to funding information technology programmes.

22. It is recognized that the role of information and communication technologies should be addressed at a strategic level within each organization in all programming, development and field work and that information and communication technologies issues should become an integral part of the decision-making processes rather than an afterthought. Concomitantly, attention needs to be given to incorporating realistic information and communication technologies components into all business plans and project development processes at the outset.

23. There is also a need to continue to work for a greater understanding — particularly of senior staff — of the potential and limitations of information and communication technologies in solving specific problems. To promote a better understanding of information and communication technologies there is a need to develop, in collaboration with the United Nations System Staff College, some core managerial training programmes in information and communication technologies for senior managers for the United Nations system.

24. Continued involvement and support from senior management is needed for promoting system-wide coordination of information and communication technologies. There is a need to make clear that cooperation is a priority. Coordination, harmonization and change management need to be supported by adequate resources.

25. Information and communication technologies managers also need to continue work in a number of crucial areas that can support the above processes, such as developing and using minimum standards to ensure compatibility and connectivity; inventorying of the United Nations system's software assets so as to enable exchanges and synergies; and leveraging the buying power of the United Nations system for better terms in procurement.

IV. Next steps/conclusions

26. As outlined above, moving forward towards enhanced system-wide coordination in the information and communication technologies area, is undoubtedly a multifaceted undertaking which involves a large number of players. There is thus a need to collaborate on the elaboration of an action plan which outlines the building blocks for a system-wide framework of information and communication technologies and includes milestones, benchmarks, resources required and most importantly responsibilities and accountabilities for results.

27. On the basis of consultation among CEB members and with inputs from the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, a proposal for such a broad system-wide strategy and an accompanying action plan will be elaborated and submitted to the Secretary-General during 2004.

28. In this context, the Task Force will continue to work with the CEB secretariat and organizations of the system in a number of areas to promote the above-mentioned approach. The Task Force will, inter alia, continue to stress the urgency of the task and keep the issue on the United Nations system leadership agenda as well as that of Member States, promote the elaboration of the action plan and catalyse partnerships with outside actors, including the private sector.